



Mental health in the time of COVID

DEPRESSION IS THE NEXT WAVE

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



One thing I have been acutely aware of during this time of coronavirus is that, as bad as it is – and it is – the state of Australians' mental health is almost certainly worse.

Financial strain, business closures, job losses, domestic pressures ... they are all taking their toll and, in one way or another, no one can escape the fallout.

But no matter how dark things get, there is always help available.

I have been tremendously impressed with all sides of government – federal and state – during the pandemic.

The unilateral recognition of possible mental health issues and a concentration of resources on alleviating the pain of sufferers has been heartening.

Mental health issues are a constant in Australian society, but we have come a long way with our view of the situation. No longer do we look on sufferers as weak or lacking in some aspect. It is seen as it should be – a medical condition that can be treated and alleviated.

You or someone you know may be experiencing separation and loneliness and, if you have lost your job or your business, you may be experiencing feelings of rejection or failure. If that's the case, talk to someone close to you, visit a medical professional, or reach out to an organisation such as Lifeline or Beyond Blue.

If you're doing OK, keep a close watch on family, friends and work colleagues. A kind word and a piece of sound advice could make all the difference to someone on the edge.

Prepared by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce in the interest of better motoring.

Share your thoughts
ceo@vacc.com.au



IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
CARS@NEWS.COM.AU OR
PO BOX 2808, GPO SYDNEY, 2001

My wife has owned a 2017 Kia Sorento from new. I like to rotate wheels every 10,000km, including the spare. The first time I did this an alert sign appeared and an alarm kept going off. The original spare wheel does not have a tyre pressure monitor system (TPMS) sensor fitted, and the Kia dealer told me one would cost \$245, but the car's computer was only programmed to read four sensors, so it wouldn't resolve the problem. It would appear the spare wheel is totally useless unless one drives with earmuffs or radio on full blast.

Joe Bass, email

TPMS sensors on spares aren't common. A Kia Australia tech expert told me you're right, and: "The system cannot read pressure in the spare tyre and therefore no sensor is fitted. The car won't beep while the customer is driving. It does it for a few seconds on start-up, then stops, however the warning light is still shown. Buying an extra sensor will solve the problem as the tyres should self-learn once fitted to the hub." Sounds fair, but it appears you've discovered differently. If yours beeps constantly, Kia should investigate and put it right.

TECH FAN

I take umbrage with Alistair Woodcraft stating: "There's too much electronic crap on a car, much of which, in my opinion, contributes to today's dreadful road toll." Seriously? The road toll was 1817 in 2000 and 1194 in 2019, a reduction of 34.5 per cent. Not enough I grant you, but significant that the toll trends downwards in relation to the amount of "electronic crap" now installed on cars.

Robert Burton, email

I think Alistair was thinking more of electronic distractions in modern cars, be it satnav, hands-free phone, infotainment menus and some driver aids affecting concentration. The road toll has plateaued in the past 10 years, which is mystifying given the huge active and passive safety advances in cars during that period.

OIL PRESSURE

Last week you recommended a reader try a

DIY oil change. I agree in theory, but you forgot to say he'll need a tool to remove the filter and fit a new washer for the oil plug. He'll also have to find a way to dispose of the oil responsibly and bring the new oil to the correct level. Then there's the dirt from crawling under the car and the bruised and bloodied knuckles from a non-mechanical person using tools.

Dylan Walters, email

You forgot dropping the sump plug in the oil pan too. You speak the truth, but it's a rite of passage the first time you hammer a screwdriver through an oil filter to free it, covering yourself in old Castrol in the process. Your first oil change is a learning process, but it's a decent life skill to have.

FINE CATCH

Re catch cans, Toyota has since stopped approving catch cans as they found there was a build-up in crankcase pressure, leading to blown rear main seals and turbo seals. ProVent has changed the design of its can recently, possibly to allow for this.

Re oil catch cans, no, manufacturers don't say you need them. But most four-wheel-drive experts do. I've used a ProVent catch can on my Mitsubishi Pajero diesel for years. I don't do big trips, mainly suburbia. I have it emptied at every 15,000km service and the can is well over half full, so it catches a lot of soot that would otherwise return back into the engine.

William Goetz, email

Paul Rayment, email

If you want to lose hours of your life, Google the whys and why nots car makers don't fit oil catch cans as standard. Pour yourself a stiff drink first.

CLOCKED ON

Re John Skene buying a lemon from Grays Online Auctions. I recently inspected a Fiat 500 at Grays in Dandenong. The odometer and books showed 50,000km but I noticed a sticker saying 'next oil service due at 125,000km'. We contacted the mechanic from the sticker and he said he'd done a service at 114,000km. The stamps in the service book turned out to be fictional. We alerted Grays and Crime Stoppers, but Grays only responded after the auction had finished and the car sold.

Buyer beware.

John Watts, email



EXECUTIVE CLASS

I'm looking to buy a used Audi A6 (2012-14), BMW 5 Series (2014-15) or Mercedes E-Class (2013-15). Which would be most reliable and which engine is best?

Harry Mistry, email

Most reliable? I'd need a crystal ball. All are good choices if you find the right car, but all have listed problems, and boy are premium Germans expensive to fix. Trust your instincts when looking at a used car, insist on a perfect service history (ideally main dealer) and have it independently inspected to avoid nasty, expensive fixes. Me? BMW 528i is an ideal all-rounder, or 535i if you want six-cylinder brilliance.

While Grays has motor dealer licences and guarantees each car has a clean title (once sold and paid for), if you buy from their auctions you've no statutory warranty or cooling-off period. If you buy a registered car from a licensed motor dealer (not at auction) you do have some cover, varying between states. Grays does suggest inspection before bidding, and states: "Any information we provide about a motor vehicle is generally information we have obtained from the vendor." Not great. Hopefully they investigate your findings – we tried to reach Grays for comment. Resources like productreview.com.au give buyers a chance to research Grays customer comments before deciding to bid.

GOOD BID

I've bought vehicles online at Pickles Motor Auctions. Never a problem. I look for two- or three-year-old government-owned cars, such as my 2015 Subaru Forester. It's never missed a beat and Subaru kept its warranty intact because I had proof of council purchase and full service history.

Russell Burton, email

Good to hear, and well-maintained (thanks, taxpayers!) ex-government cars are safer bets than private trade-ins dealers don't want. Same auction risks apply though, and Pickles' customer reviews can also be seen at productreview.com.au

NUMBER CRUNCHING

Re E10 fuel, some service stations list it as 91 octane, and others at 94 octane. Which is it and will the lower one result in less performance?

Douglas Hitchon, email

Sometimes you'll see "unleaded 91 with E10" advertised – BP for example – using "up to 10 per cent renewable ethanol." Ethanol boosts the octane rating, so 91 fuel with 10 per cent ethanol (E10) should have a 94 octane rating. Shell, for instance, guarantees its E10 has a "minimum 94 octane rating." In plain English, your car's performance won't really suffer, but E10 has less energy so fuel economy won't be as good. Me? I won't put E10 in my cars. Anecdotally, mechanics have told me it can result in fuel system problems.

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